



The People, Places and Events of

# THE EARLY RENAISSANCE





## THE HISTORY SURROUNDING MERCHANT PRINCE

We would like to include a brief historical background for the players but we have neither the room nor the money to include the necessary five volume set. Not only was the fourteenth century particularly active but Merchant Prince spans the entire known world at the time and then some. Thus we have decided to include a sort of historical glossary of people, places and events that we found important or interesting.

Niccolo Machiavelli - A political theorist who lived in 15th century Florence and advisor to Lorenzo DeMedici "the Magnificent". In his most famous book, The Prince, Machievelli gives step by step instructions for the ruler of a state in acquiring, maintaining and increasing political power. In the Discourses, and in The Florentine Histories he comes out in favor of republics as a form of government as opposed to despotism.

Roderigo Borgia - Pope Alexander VI, father of Cesare and Lucrezia Borgia, and patriarch of the infamous Borgia family. Roderigo was known for his ruthlessness to his enemies and the opulence of his entertainments. He bought the Papacy from his rivals, Cardinals della Rovere and Sforza, and then used Cesare in an attempt to create an hereditary empire out of the Papal States and Romagna.

Marco Polo - Venetian adventurer and writer sent to the Mongols with his father on a diplomatic mission by the Pope. He is credited with many discoveries while travelling in the Orient for twenty four years.

He served as an emissary for Kubla Khan and detailed life in the far East for European readers. He dictated his book, Description of the World, while in a Genoese prison.

Genghis Khan - Founder and ruler of the first Mongol Empire that stretched from the Yellow Sea to Poland and Hungary. He was the first of a series of brilliant Mongol conquerors from 1214 to 1350 who opened the roads to China. His sons and grandsons, Batu Khan, Mangu Khan, Kublai Khan and Hulagu "were as able a dynasty as ever ruled a great empire."

Timur the Lame - The Muslim/Tartar creator of an empire which replaced the southern Mongol Empires in the late 14th Century. On his death the over land trade routes to the Orient were closed.

Osman - The founder of the Ottoman Empire which grew from a single tribe of Turks to an empire which dominated the Balkans, Asia minor, the middle east and North Africa until the early 20th Century. He and his son Orhan began their conquests in 1326, captured Constantinople in 1453, and founded a dynasty lasting until 1922.

Pietro Barbo - Pope Paul II, he served from 1464 to 1471. He is best known for building the Palazzo San Marco in Rome while a Cardinal. He was the first Pope to allow women to "entertain" in the Vatican. He was a wealthy Venetian merchant turned Cardinal and his worldly ways set an example which was followed by his successors. He was one of several Cardinals in the Barbo family at the time.

Vlad Tepes the Impaler - This bloodthirsty prince of Wallachia was a dedicated foe of the Turks after

serving as a hostage to them for his fathers good behavior. He is believed to be the inspiration for Bram Stokers horror classic, Dracula.

Leonardo DaVinci - One of the most brilliant men of all time, DaVinci was an artist and a scientist. Best known for his painting, The Mona Lisa, he also experimented with flight and was one of the first men to look analytically at human anatomy, though only for artistic purposes.

Michelangelo Buonarroti - One of the most famous Renaissance artists, he was commissioned to paint the ceiling of the Cistine Chapel by Pope Julius II in 1508. It is believed that Michelangelo was under the close supervision of the Pope to authenticate the theological content of the mural. He was allowed free reign on his Last Judgement in 1536.

Dante Alegheri - Dante was the author of the Divine Comedy and was the first person to write in vernacular Italian as opposed to Latin. His patron was Lorenzo DeMedici of Florence.

Giovanni Boccaccio - One of the first humanists, Boccaccio was the author of the Decameron, an influential predecessor of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

Doge - A salaried Venetian official, he filled the role of head of state. He was elected for life, often over his own objections. Doges were mostly septuagenarians chosen to give the impression of serene leadership. He presided over the ritual marriage of Venice to the sea.

The deMedicis - The famous ruling family of Florence was one of the most influential clans in all history. They include two Popes, a Queen of France, innumerable lesser luminaries as well as becoming one of the two largest mercantile and banking families in Europe. They were patrons to the likes of DaVinci and Machiavelli. In a famous assassination attempt the enemies of Lorenzo and Guiliano, the Pazzi, attempted to slay them during a High Mass. Lorenzo fought his way out of the Cathedral but Guiliano died. Lorenzo then exacted a revenge of complete annihilation on the Pazzi family and their co-conspirators.

The Fuggers - This family led by Jakob surpassed the Medicis in banking during the 15th century. They made loans to the Holy Roman Emperors and were the Papal bankers in northern Europe. They used the silver and copper mines they received as collateral to make them the richest family in Europe.

Muslim Scholars - ibn Khaldun a social philosopher from Tunis and consultant to Tamerlane, travelled the world and was the source of many written records which have survived to the present. ibn Batuta "the islamic Marco Polo" visited every Muslim country and many neighboring nations and wrote descriptions of them.

Mamluks - This dynasty ruled Egypt and parts of the Levant and destroyed the last of the Crusader's states in the Holy Land. They prevented the Mongols from penetrating into Africa. They were a major power in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Condottieri - These mercenary captains provided most of the military force available to the Italian city states during the Renaissance. Some were unscrupulous and would "fight" battles in which neither side had

casualties and would occasionally overthrow the Prince who had hired them and take over his realm. Among the most famous were Colleoni and Gattamelata of Venice, the Montefeltros of Ferrera, and d'Algere who was seconded from France.

Janizaries - The foremost warriors for the Ottoman Empire they were forbidden to marry and were loyal only to the Sultan. They were the handpicked sons of Christian prisoners and were physically large. They were brought up from childhood in a pseudo-military religion.

Silk Road - The Silk Road was the name for a collection of caravan routes between Baghdad and China. It was opened after the Mongol conquests and remained open for only about a century.

Black Death - The Black Death is a vernacular term for the Bubonic Plague, a disease characterized by the appearance of very large black swellings called "bubos" which would eventually rupture, spewing a sticky virulent fluid. The Plague was carried by rat fleas and killed over a third of the population of Europe during the 14th and 15th centuries. It put on hold the one hundred years war, devastated whole countries, and led many to believe that the apocalypse was upon them, helping to inspire such bizarre behaviors as the Danse Macabre and the self destructive Flagellant Crusade (immortalized in one of Several Dudes' favorite films, Monty Python's Holy Grail). Major outbreaks struck Europe through the 17th century.

Fourth Crusade - The so-called fourth Crusade against the Seljuk Turks was side tracked by the Venetian merchants who were transporting the crusaders to the Holy Land. The Venetians required the crusaders to attack several of their enemies, including Constantinople (Byzantium) in 1203, on the way to the Holy

Land as part of their transport fees. The Venetians then set up a puppet emperor in Byzantium and ruled much of the Aegean Sea via proxies in the Latin Empire.

League of Cambrai - An alliance of The Holy Roman Empire, Spain and the Papacy with many Swiss mercenaries aimed first at Venice and later at France. Over five years starting with 1508 and with the help of excommunication it was fairly successful in taking some of Venice's more recent acquisitions on mainland Italy, a region known as The Veneto.

The One Hundred Years War - The one hundred years war began in 1327 when Edward III of England invaded France. Over the next 116 years armies of both sides would march to and fro across France in attempts to defeat the rival kingdom. This war saw some of the most famous commanders on both sides such as Joan of Arc, The Black Prince, John of Gaunt, and Henry V. It also saw the development of the longbow, crossbow, arqbus, and some of the first use of black powder artillery in field battles. The French eventually captured Bordeaux in 1453 ending the war even though Calias, the last English outpost on mainland France, would not fall until over a century later.

Indulgences - Indulgences were documents sold by agents of the Church which allowed for the forgiveness of sins in return for monetary considerations. They were even sold to forgive sins not yet committed. The sale of indulgences in Northern Europe was a major cause of the Reformation.

The Great Schism - In the early 1300s a majority of the Divine College of cardinals was French. They moved the Papacy to Avignon, France. As long as Papal elections were held in Rome, the French



Cardinals were under great secular pressure to elect an Italian Pope. Under those conditions, they elected the Italian Pope Urban VI in 1377. After they returned to France, though, these Cardinals renounced Urban and elected a fellow Frenchman to be Pope Clement VII. A short war for the Vatican ensued in which Clement was unable to depose Urban. During the following schism both Popes fought constantly; Urban was known for torturing and murdering opposing Cardinals. Each Papacy had duplicate bishops, holy orders and generals. The schismatic Popes spent their entire treasuries trying to overthrow one another. Finally, in 1429, a compromise was reached with the election of Martin V, though the last French Pope of Avignon would remain defiant until his death twenty years later.

Hanseatic League - A trading confederation centered in Northern Germany which grew to include over seventy cities. It controlled monopolies of trade in the North and Baltic Seas. Its fortunes declined with the rise of Sweden, Russia, and Denmark as independent kingdoms.

Venice - One of the major powers in Medieval Italy. It was founded by refugees from the barbarian conquerors of the Roman Empire and grew to become the largest mercantile center in the Mediterranean Basin. The Venetians lived in limited Republic headed by the Council of Ten and the Doge.

At its' peak, Venice controlled "one quarter and one half of one quarter" of the former Roman empire. Venice lost its primacy in the Mediterranean when the land routes to Asia were cut by the Turks and the Portuguese discovered the sea route around Africa and cut the Venetian routes in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

Genoa - Genoa along with Pisa and Amalfi were Venice's main trade rivals during the 14th century. These

rivalries often sparked wars between them and were a constant source of political maneuvering within Italy and geo-economic dispute.

Timbuktu - The capital of Mali, Timbuktu was a rich source of gold and a center for trans-Saharan trade. It was conquered in 1468 by the Songhai ruler Sonni Ali. At its' height in 1350 it was the center of an empire as large as all of Western Europe.

Cog - This wide hulled, slow and ungainly craft was the primary cargo vessel of Europe in the 14th century. It was relatively seaworthy and easy to sail and maintain.

Galleasses - These great oar and sail driven ships were the finest fighting vessels until the advent of the caravel in the late 15th century, which was able to carry far more canons. Rowed by prisoners from the Venetian jails and captained by mercenaries they gave Venice and Genoa command of the Mediterranean for over a century.

The Arsenal - The largest industrial complex in Europe for centuries to come, it covered sixty acres. By 1480 it allowed the simultaneous production of 116 galleys in Venice.

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